

Moran Works to Modernize Guard and Reserve Benefits

Sponsors Legislation to Enhance Education Benefits and Lower Retirement Age

WASHINGTON, D.C. - Congressman Jerry Moran this week announced his support for legislation to modernize benefits for members serving in the National Guard and Reserve. Though close to 500,000 members of the Guard and Reserve have been called up since September 11, their benefits do not always match their increased service. Moran has sponsored legislation to provide more adequate compensation by enhancing education benefits and lowering the age of retirement for guardsmen and reservists. The House Veterans' Affairs Committee, where Moran serves as a senior member, has begun a series of hearings on improving Guard and Reserve component education benefits.

"From towns across Kansas, citizen soldiers have stepped up to play an increasingly vital role in the defense of our nation, from protecting our freedoms in Iraq and Afghanistan to protecting our borders," Moran said. "More and more, we are asking members of the Guard and Reserve to serve alongside and take the same risks as active duty members. Their contribution has changed and so should their compensation. The reality of today's military demands we modernize Guard and Reserve benefits to show our nation's appreciation to these brave men and women and to improve our military's ability to recruit and retain forces."

"Enhancing educational benefits and lowering the retirement age is not only of great benefit to manning the Kansas National Guard, but it simply makes good business sense," Craig Beardsley, President of the National Guard Association of Kansas, said. "The

improved educational benefits help us to attract and retain quality soldiers and airmen for the near term. The lowered retirement age encourages those same quality individuals to stay in the Kansas National Guard until retirement.”

The original G.I. Bill was authored by Kansas Legionnaire Harry Colmery in 1944 and has provided education benefits to millions of veterans. However, in the last 20 years, the value of the standard Montgomery G.I. Bill for members of the Guard and Reserve has fallen from 47 percent to 29 percent of active duty benefits. In addition, these are the only benefits that guardsmen and reservists who serve on activated duty cannot access once they separate from service. To address this inequity, Moran has sponsored the Total Force G.I. Bill. This legislation would allow activated guardsmen and reservists to earn the same G.I. Bill benefits as active duty soldiers and enable them to use those benefits after they leave the service.

Moran has also sponsored legislation to lower the retirement age for Guard and Reserve members who have served at least 20 years. Unlike active duty forces that have no age restrictions on retirement once their 20 years of service is complete, Guard and Reserve members are ineligible to receive retirement pay until they reach age 60. This legislation allows members to begin drawing their retirement pay at age 55 rather than at age 60. Moran is also supportive of alternative legislation that will reduce the age for receipt of retirement pay by increments of 3 months for every 90 days a Guard or Reserve member spends on active duty after September 11, 2001, enabling members to retire as early as age 50.

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